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ABSTRACT

This report describes a human relations training methodology which shows the basic importance of attuning students to their own private world of stimulation and is the cutting edge of the motivation to learn. The study includes four sections: (1) methodology of personal growth training, (2) an explanation of why such an intensive method of training is needed, (3) examples of terminal student behavior, and (4) a brief list of specific personnel and budget resources needed. The first section emphasizes explicit definitions of feelings and distinguishes from phases of the training process in personal growth. The second section examines middle class maturity norms and concludes that the norm is for the person to have a well-developed head but a highly suppressed body. The third part lists eight examples of behavior of a person if he were fully competent in affective self-awareness and cognitive skills. Finally, the report concludes that practical requirements should be explored before beginning a personal growth pattern. (Author/MC)

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HUMAN RELATIONS TRAINING:

THE CUTTING EDGE OF THE MOTIVATION TO LEARN

by

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Where does a student's phenomenal world of ideas, perceptions, feelings fit in the affective domain? While the imaginative enumeration of the taxonomy of affective objectives (Krathwohl, Bloom, & Masia, 1964) helps depict some of the behavioral outcomes, the methodological issue of what is involved in getting to the outcomes is vaguely understood by educators. For example, Bloom (1956) stated about the affective domain:

> "...teachers do not appear to be very clear about the learning experiences which are appropriate to these objectives. It is difficult to describe the behaviors appropriate to these objectives since the internal or covert feelings and emotions are as significant for this domain as are the overt behavioral manifestations (p. 7)."

This paper describes a human relations training methodology--personal growth--which shows the fundamental importance of attuning students to their own private world of stimulation, and is at the cutting edge of the motivation to learn. There is a tragic need for teachers in all levels and subject matters to dare to be human with students so that their private world of experience might become a positive source of energy to learn and to create. Following sections describe the methodology of personal growth training, with special emphasis on a more explicit definition of feelings; next is an explanation of why such an intensive method of training is needed in our culture; examples of terminal student behaviors are given; finally, a brief list of the special personnel and budget resources needed is presented.

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Methodology of personal growth training

Person-oriented sensitivity training uses small groups (eight to thirty persons) with a minimum of predetermined structure to encourage members to participate in learning about themselves, their effects on others, and about others and their effects on them. While the group has usually come together for the published purpose of personal growth or development, the issues of "What are we really here for?" and "Which methods and procedures shall we use?" generate tensions which lead to high involvement by most if not all members. Such an unstructured operation initially generates confusion, frustration, and finally action on the part of members. Some trainers take fairly active part; other trainers are relatively inactive. Discussion of goals, experimentation with methods, and frequent evaluation of individual and group progress is strongly encouraged. Trainers try to help the group develop norms and procedures known to be useful for the purpose of personal growth.

A central focus in personal growth training is the experience of feelings. Just what is an "inner feeling?" How does a person experience one? An inner feeling is a sensory or imaginal event a person finds in his awareness. Sensory events include the chemical and muscle condition of the stomach that causes a person to verbalize, "I'm hungry." The awareness of the chemical/muscle condition is the feeling; the statement, "I'm hungry" is a verbal label selected by a cognitive process, or a habit produced by conditioning. Imaginal events include a mental picture of something. The picture may be of a desired or undesired object or situation; or the picture may appear to have no incentive value. A vision of being at the beach on a hot summer day is an example of an image with positive valence. What is the difference between affect and cognition?

A percept may occur to one's consciousness without an awareness of any accompanying sensations or images. Less often, a feeling may occur without an

accompanying percept. Affect sensorily or imaginally occurs spontaneously, often without precise form or clear antecedents. Cognitions produced by conditioning likewise occur sponteneously; more complex cognitive processes occur by deliberate exercise of logical analysis. In our culture, training tends to be to selectively inattend to affect, and selectively attend to motor behavior and cognitions. One does not usually decide consciously to have feelings--they just happen. Further, feelings by definition cannot be judged right or wrong--they are events that occur. The typical function of a psychological defense is to decrease or eliminate awareness of affect, and to appear to be using one's intellect.

A common sense view is that feelings are the "self-talk" which one almost continuously does with oneself. The "self-talk" is sometimes a random, sometimes an organized sub-vocalization to ourselves, in which we identify an object we have just seen, plan some action to be taken later, or reminisce about some previous experience. Such self-talk reflects our inner feelings to some extent, as does any verbalization, but is <u>not itself</u> the more generic form of affective experience. In summary, feelings are not verbal labels--feelings are sensations and images.

Returning to methods used in personal growth training, the author has found it highly efficient to distinguish four phases of the training process, and to relate specific methods to the peculiar needs of students in each phase.

<u>Phase One</u>: The student becomes aware of his inner emotional experiences. This step is largely a non-verbal experience, so non-verbal techniques are very helpful. Rather than ask participants in a group initially to begin verbalizing their feelings, a wide variety of non-verbal techniques are available to help participants more fully appreciate sensations and images. An atmosphere of relaxation and freedom of response styles is highly conducive. For relaxation, Yoga exercises--see Hittleman (1968), or body toning techniques such as back

slapping or massaging as in Gunther (1969) break the ice quickly and induce a calm yet attentive mood. Freedom of response styles is quickly established by encouraging students to share their experiences in non-verbal exercises--illustrating that each person may have a widely varying reaction to the same stimulus. The trainer's role at this point is to assure that such reports are not implicitly judged right or wrong. Other suggestions for non-verbal techniques are in Schutz (1967), Malamud & Machover (1965), and Pesso (1969).

Success in phase one means the individual is comfortable with his world of feelings, and with relative ease can discover his feeling state when he chooses to do so.

Phase two: The student decides what to do with a discovered feeling. He may decide to share the feeling with trusted others, or he may decide to privately ponder it further or suppress it. When one discovers a strong emotional reaction in himself, he finds he is also reacting to strong internal and external inhibitors. Internally, there are emotional and intellectual inhibitions: fear of uncovering a childish impulse long denied, and knowledge that revelation of a strong feeling is likely to be discomforting to others. Meanwhile, external inhibitors are verbal and non-verbal cues from others that a person may be shunned or punished for publicly emoting.

Since the decision in step two is usually a private one, non-verbal techniques likewise help participants work out the issues involved. As Schutz (1967) depicts, this step two decision may be called the problem of inclusion. Mixed feelings are involved: every person needs some attention, but also needs to be correctly understood in the process of becoming involved in a group (Schutz, 1967, pp. 117-118). One of the most helpful techniques is simply to suggest to the student that he leave the room, and watch the group from an outside window. Physically leaving the

room gives the student a chance to more vividly experience his inner reactions with fewer external inhibitions present; it also makes it easier for him to identify the factors in the group that were aversive to him. Typically, the student finds the fuller discovery of these two dimensions a source of relief, and enables him to make a fresh decision to rejoin the group. Schutz (1967) gives additional suggestions for non-verbal techniques that help in step two.

Phase Three: The discovery of the consequences of decisions in step two. If a person decides to share a feeling or idea, he finds out the impact of his behavior or communication on others by their reactions. If a person decides not to share a feeling or idea at the time, he finds out the impact of that decision on his own functioning. Traditional therapy groups work largely with phase three. A myriad of techniques, verbal and non-verbal, are helpful in step three: paraphrasing, role playing, psychodrama, doubling, fantasy trips, and non-verbal exercises involving two or persons.

Phase Four: The integration of one's affective capacity with one's intellectual processes. For some, integration comes easily. For others, considerable confusion and frustration occurs. The period may last for days or even months. Each person finds new ways in which he desires to utilize his affect in relation to the wide varieties of situations, people, and tasks in which he functions. Such a process has been called an attempt to be more genuine, authentic, or congruent (Rogers,1961). In relations with other persons, the individual must wisely judge when it is possible for the other person to understand his expression of feelings. This involves developing a balanced reciprocity of emotional and intellectual communication. A similar notion of reciprocity has been described by Gouldmer (1960). Thus, integration of affect and cognition involve a process of becoming more genuine, with a balanced reciprocity in relationships a limiting interpersonal requirement.

Why is such an intensive method needed in our culture?

There are some serious cultural inadequacies that compel us to more strongly emphasize affective objectives. In our middle-class white culture, most people have been trained to be virtually unaware of their inner experiences; they are trained to attend largely to events outside of themselves. Shostrom (1967) details the plight of the common human condition of manipulation in relationships:

> "...Above all, a manipulator wants no one, not even loved ones, to learn his deeper feelings....Disguising his true emotions is a hallmark of a manipulator...(for example) he doesn't actually experience the grief one human being should have naturally for the loss of another, or he is too conditioned to allow himself to express such feelings. From there it's but a short step to having no conscious feelings at all about one's fellow man except as it becomes easier, thereby, to use him as a thing (p. 5)."

This cultural inadequacy is reflected in the search for examples of affective objectives by Krathwohl, et al (1964). They found available examples so primitive that "little in the way of meaning is at present conveyed by statements of (affective) objectives." (Krathwohl, et al, 1964, p. 21)

The suppression of affect is shown in our norms for a mature person in our middle-class culture: he is rational, unemotional, kind to others, quiet, clean and neat. We have strong verbal and non-verbal sanctions for these norms. Teachers feel a heavy responsibility to enforce these norms. The typical school environment highlights these expectations. Let's look at each norm.

Rational: the mature person is intelligent, logical, and objective in his problem-solving. He seldom allows his emotions to visibly influence his thinking and verbalizing.

Unemotional: the mature person does not impulsively express anger or love, excitement or sadness. He has almost complete control over his bodily-emotional reactions, and does not let strong feelings show in what he says or does.

The first two norms govern the general development of the person--a model dominated by cognitive objectives. Much of the school experience--at elementary, secondary, and college levels--is aimed at the dognitive realm. Students are expected to think and act as if their affective world is unrelated and unacceptable in the educational environment. These two general norms are further implemented by the others, which deal with morality and habits.

Kind to others: the mature person is unselfish, denies self, and is considerate and kind to other people. He will never be rude, hostile, hurtful, or just ignore others. If he does slip, he is expected to apologize immediately, and deny the reality of his own feelings.

Quiet: The mature person often shows his morality and kindness by being quiet around other people. He should talk and act in ways that do not disrupt or disturb others.

Clean and neat: the mature person displays his self-control by being clean and neat. Excess hair is read as slovenliness. Unusual clothing is suspect of social deviation. A shirt tail hanging out of a boy's pants is taken as indicative of unruliness. Especially heavy sanctions are applied in school settings around these most specific norms. Each specific habit norm implies inferences about the person's more general characteristics.

In short, the middle-class norm of maturity is that the person has a well-developed head and a highly suppressed body. By denying the affective component in all thinking and acting, our culture handicaps people by creating the false image that affect is the enemy of the person and society. So much for our cultural inadequacie:

Behavioral outcomes of personal growth training

If a person were fully competent in affective self-awareness and cognitive skills, what would be his behaviors? Here are some examples.

1. During or after having a strong emotional reaction, the person "owns" his feelings rather than displacing them or projecting them onto others. For example, after having thrown a book on the floor in anger, the teacher confronts the student. The student willingly admits his anger. He is able to sort out his inner affective state from external, related events. He does not blame his anger on a fellow student for harassing him, or on the teacher for being unfair, unless he has concrete evidence to support such accusations.
2. A person is not frightened or repulsed at others' expression of strong ideas or feelings. He "hears" the person behind the words being used, and is able to move closer to gain further understanding if he is willing to try to be reciprocal with the other person. In the above example, the teacher confronting the angry student moves toward the student to talk to him, and confronts him in a way that allows both parties to be genuine.
3. A person in a higher status position is willing to express his feelings in confrontation with another person. Again using the above example, the teacher himself may be startled or angered by the noise of the book being thrown on the floor. The teacher shares his feelings as part of the confrontation, rather than just tell the student not to make noise. In this sense, the author disagrees with the dictum to "be angry at the objective behavior, but not at the misbehaving person." This dictum implies that the

teacher should always be able to be objective in his perceptions of students' behaviors, and to channel his own anger into a rational approach. In short, it inclines one to deny the basic nature of an inner feeling, i.e., that it lacks form and definition.

4. When not able to achieve an intellectual or affective objective, the person initiates a discussion of his problem with relevant resource people. He does not wait for a low grade to show up on his report card. He initiates a discussion with those who might help him discover what his motivational or ability problems might be.
5. When engaged in an intellectual discussion, he shows awareness of the critical difference between objective facts (verifiable consensually), and abstractions (opinions, goals, predictions). Given a difference of opinion, he recognizes the constructive next step is to refer to relevant facts and definitions of terms. He does not attack the credibility of the protagonist. When faced with a difference in goals or values, he is genuinely accepting of the other person's position.
6. His typical mental state while learning is a spontaneous, interwoven awareness both of his ideas and his feelings. This mental state shows in his ability to express himself both cognitively and affectively.
7. When asked to do something creative, with minimal guidance from a teacher, he has numerous ideas and impulses. He freely begins to try out his ideas. He does not hold back, asking for further hints from the teacher.

8. He knows when he needs others to show him they care. He is not afraid to recognize when he needs love and caring from others. He is free to ask for love. He is aware of the many games people play that skirt the issue of mutual caring.

The language of these objectives differsin one essential sense from most of the terminology in the affective taxonomy (Krathwohl, et al, 1964). In the taxonomy, the operation typically involves an external object. In the above objectives, the prime operation involves the self as a focus without an intent to shape the valence of a person's inner reactions. The taxonomy might be called objectively behavioristic. The above objectives might be called phenomenally behavioristic.

Special personnel and financial resources needed

Personal growth training is not universally applicable. There are important limitations and requirements for a sound program in an educational system. Below is a discussion of some of the key considerations.

The training must be consistent with the philosophy of education and the behaviors of administrators and teachers in the system. A first step in exploring feasibility is a thorough series of discussions between consultants and key administrators and teachers in the school. Staff in the school must be convinced that such an approach fits their central goals in their system. Further, a majority of the key personnel must be willing to commit themselves to be among the first participants in a program.

The consultants selected for the personal growth training roles must have the proper credentials. Sufficient clinical training and supervised experience is essential, part of the precautions noted by Lakin (1969). The consultant should be willing to specify his credentials, and give references. Further, the consultant should have the skill of clearly communicating the specific objectives and methods

he is proposing. Schein & Bennis (1965) and Bradford, Gibb & Benne (1964) portray the wide varieties of human relations training objectives and methods.

Adequate funding must be available for proper conditions to make the training effective. Qualified consultants are expensive. Adequate facilities, preferably removed from the usual work environment, create a retreat atmosphere that is highly conducive. Sometimes a school system defrays the cost by paying the tuition, but by having voluntary participants pay their own food and lodging.

A program for a school or district must be genuinely voluntary. To require persons to attend, or even to subtly hint that a person should go, invalidates the most essential personal freedom needed for phases one and two to work! Further, to require a person to attend a personal growth session against his will is potentially damaging.

Adequate plans--money and time--must be built in for follow-up to help persons during phases three and four. While early phases often are best accomplished in residential retreat-like facilities, there ultimately is a need for follow-up at the school, sometimes with families. Sometimes a participant merely needs a few minutes to sort out some problems. Sometimes a participant needs several hours of discussion to untangle a complicated problem. Equally as important, a participant sometimes may need to bring in other loved ones (especially if they did not attend) to help untangle the impact of the intensive experience on their relationships.

These practical requirements should be thoroughly explored before beginning a personal growth program. It may take years before a school or a school system is prepared to undertake such a venture. Meanwhile, interested persons may seek out experiences in groups operating elsewhere, so that they are better prepared, and perhaps might help serve as facilitators once their own organization undertakes such a project.

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